

Bhakti Yoga - PART 06

SWĀMI DAYATMANANDA

Class begins with the chanting of the following Shanti mantra:

ॐ सह नावतु ।
सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Saha Naav Avatu |
Saha Nau Bhunaktu |
Saha Viiryam Karavaavahai |
Tejasvi Naav Adhiitam Asthu Maa Vidvissaavahai: |
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih: ||

Meaning:-

Om May Brahman protect us both |
May Brahman bestow upon us both, the fruit of knowledge |
May we both obtain the energy to acquire knowledge |
May what we both study reveal the truth
May we cherish no ill-feeling toward each other |
Om Peace Peace Peace be unto all ||

Continuing the discussion on Bhakti Yoga

So, the Bhakti Yoga of Swami Vivekananda, to summarize what we had discussed in our last class, that before we proceed on the path of devotion, we must have a correct understanding or concept about God. Why is it so necessary, we discussed because first, our concept of God depends upon our state of consciousness. What we are and that alone determines our concept of God. If we are body bound, then God has form, God has name, and God has qualities. If our state of consciousness is slightly higher, accordingly, and progressively, our concept of God also grows. Swami Vivekananda used to say God grows along with man. Really, God does not grow but our idea of God grows. So, this is the first point we had discussed. I will enter into more details a little bit later. Why we should have a right concept of God? Because our concept of God has a tremendous influence upon our behavior. For example, if a person has a concept of God who is cruel, who does not know what is called mercy or compassion, or who is

partial, what happens? The person also becomes cruel and very partial, and fanatical. For example, a fanatic believes that nobody enters into paradise excepting himself. And in that community to which he belongs, only the men enter into the paradise. The women, even if they enter into paradise, [they do enter into paradise because man cannot live], only women enter into the paradise to serve the men. This is the idea some people have about God, about the Paradise. Just as our nature also influences our concept of God, so also, our concept of God, in its turn, influences our character. Suppose a person imagines God is very loving, very kind, very compassionate, what happens? Our very nature also will change even if we do not have those qualities. It is because as we go on thinking of God, what do we think of God? His qualities. Even His body also has influence upon our bodies. Not a fifteen minutes' indifferent type of meditation but if we really go on focusing, then our very body will change. Sri Ramakrishna used to meditate on Hanuman. Has not his body changed? He meditated on Radha. Has not his body changed? St. Francis meditated upon the body of Christ. And actually, there was crucifixion, blood coming out of his palms, etc. Quite a number of mystics are found to have these things. So, not to speak of the body, our very mind will be transformed because we become what we think deeply, intensely, and most of the time. That is why it is said that you let me know what you think, and I will tell you what you are. In other ways also, if you tell me who your friends are, I will tell you who you are because we do choose our friends, our food, our dress, all depends upon our thoughts. And our thoughts depend upon what we think as the worthiest thing in life; what is the most important thing in life. If we think this world is very important, our whole nature will change. So, this is why we must have a right understanding or concept about God. Most of us, we spend time in Japa, prayer, meditation, and other spiritual practices. But we do not find, very often, much progress in our lives. What is the reason for that? Are we doing something wrong? What has gone wrong with us? Why is there not so much expected transformation? It is because we are not thinking of God in the proper way. Swami Brahmananda used to advice his disciples and devotees that before entering into meditation, sit quietly. Let the body and mind become calm, peaceful, quiet. Why is this advice given? Because this very concept that we become very quiet, also our understanding about God becomes changed. Suppose we are very restless, what would be our concept of God? Restless God. When we are angry, our God also becomes angry. As I gave the example, you know, these robbers, highway robbers in India called Dacoits? They used to worship Mother Kali. Out of thirty-three million God and Goddesses, why had they chosen only Mother Kali's form or concept? That is because it excellently suits their purpose. And so, thinking about her also influences their behavior. They do not feel remorse in killing other people because that is their idea of God or Goddess. So, Swami Brahmananda used to say, first be very peaceful, sit quietly, mind becomes quiet. Then, you should imagine your IshTa is looking at you with the greatest pleasure, with

a beautiful smile on his face, that is why Hindu Gods and Goddesses are always depicted as smiling. Very pleased with us. Now, we know that we are not worthy of their pleasure really speaking. Of course, deep inside we do have that idea that we are the worthiest recipients of God's grace. My neighbor may not but I am certainly most worthy. But I tell people, "No, no I am a great sinner. I am not worthy, etc. etc.". So, when we look upon God as though he is pleased with us, that also affects our character. Because usually we judge ourselves and more than ourselves, other people with our human outlook (human understanding). If somebody has committed something wrong, then we are apt to criticize that person, look down upon that person with the greatest harshness. And we think God also does exactly the same thing. How do you know that God does these things? In fact, He never does it. If you want to know how God looks upon us, then you have to see how Holy Mother used to look upon devotees. Do you think every devotee was such an advanced soul that they were all pure and sinless and all that? Most of them were not wicked people, I would not say wicked, but ordinary human beings with ordinary human feelings – worldly type of people. And yet she never rejected anybody unless they were great sinners (one or two exceptions) and that too she rejected not because she is not having mercy upon them, she did not allow them to come near because it affects her own body. Now, her body is meant for the good of lot of people. But if she allows them to touch her, then her life may be endangered. That is the simple reason why she did not allow. Sri Ramakrishna also used to say worldly people, please go away or sprinkle Ganges water where they used to sit. He was not looking down upon them, they cannot look down upon anyone. But he was doing it because their contact would reduce / diminish their effectiveness to some extent. And they did not want to waste their energy, their power. Even an incarnation has a limited power. Compared with us, it would look as though they have unlimited power. But compared from their point of view, even an ocean can dry up if the water is wasted. So, they want to do the greatest good.

Anyway, we must have correct concept of God if we have to progress in spiritual life. One of the greatest obstacles in spiritual life, do you know what it is? It is called Frustration. There is a story – the old devil wanted to take retirement, so it was selling all its tools at a throwaway price. A lot of aspiring young devils flocked to have (Sale means we all rush!). So, they all went there, and every tool was so costly, were old rusty used for a long time but every tool, you know, one thousand pounds, two thousand pounds. But still they are very much usable. Then they found out that in a glass case, there was a very crumpled, rusty, oldest type of small tool, one hundred thousand pounds. The young devils did not know – what is this? All those other good tools, you are selling only at one thousand pounds, two thousand pounds but this stupid old instrument, one hundred thousand pounds !! The old devil explained, "You see, when all the other tools fail, this is one tool with which I could corrupt human

beings". "Oh! What is the name of this tool?" "It is called Frustration". Twenty years, thirty years, forty years, go on doing Japa, prayer, meditation, nothing much seems to be happening. Then we give up in frustration. Why do we do that? What does frustration mean? It means there is no chance of progressing in spiritual life, God is never going to answer my prayers. God is highly displeased with me. How do you know that God is displeased with you? Do you think God will ever be displeased with you? He is doing all He can so that you will gradually progress towards Him. But we do not know that. He knows that. But if we have a correct understanding of God – God is very loving, He is taking care of me, He will never abandon me. Even if I abandon God, He will never abandon me. If we have that understanding of God, there would be no case for frustration. Sri Ramakrishna used to illustrate this with the most marvelous parable – There were two Yogis sitting under trees and praying. One became a Yogi or spiritual aspirant only recently, just a few years back and the other person who has been praying for so many years, since his childhood he has been praying. Narada was one day passing through that way, and these two aspirants met him, saw him, where are you going Narada? "I am going to Lord!" "OK, we have a question, could you kindly take it to the Lord and bring back the answer?" "Surely". So, Narada went; after some time, he returned, and he met the first Yogi who has been practicing only for a few years. So, the Yogi asked, "Did you ask the Lord?" "Yes" "What was His answer?" "His answer was, just you have to do for one or two years more, then He will give you His vision". The question was, "When is the Lord going to show Himself to us?". So, after one or two years – this man started weeping "Oh, what is this! I have already spent so many years, and still one or two years I have to do". Started weeping. Narada said, "I am sorry. This is what the Lord told me" and went on to the second man. Second man had been practicing ever since his childhood. So, Narada was asked, "Did you bring back the answer?" "He said "Yes". "What was the answer?" "Look at the tree under which you are sitting." It happened to be a tamarind tree (very huge tree with the smallest type of leaves, millions, and millions of leaves). "Look, as many leaves there are on this tree, so many times you have to re-born before you have the vision of the Lord". The man jumped up with joy and started dancing! "Oh God! How merciful He is !! So soon am I going to see him?!" And as soon as he said that, immediately the Lord appeared and said, "I am very pleased with you. Here I am". This is the parable Sri Ramakrishna had said. Now, what is the concept of these two people about God? The first person who just started his spiritual life, it is a very painful duty to be somehow done. He must have been a very frustrated soul in the world, he did not get anything, so he became a spiritual aspirant. And he has been calling upon the Lord as a painful duty. So, when Narada said "You have to still pray for another one or two years", he became all the more frustrated. Whereas for the other person, calling upon the Lord is the greatest joy, he is not doing it out of a sense of painful duty, he is doing it because he loves to call upon the Lord. Whether the Lord

comes or not, that is a different matter. He is not bothered about it. His thinking about God is quite satisfying for him. Only a most loving person can do it. So, his concept of God is, God is so merciful.

Now, how many of us really think that God is really merciful? Just imagine. I have come across so many devotees, and they are apparently very sincere and very good in every respect. But there is a problem with their concept of God. As long as things are going on well, "Well, the good Lord is really good. He deserves the title, Good". But as soon as things start going wrong, not because they attribute everything to God – "Why is Sri Ramakrishna doing this to us? Why is Thakur putting us through all this misery? As though Thakur has no other business excepting to attend to your private affairs. It is the nature of this world. Every living creature, it will grow up, it will have sometimes health, sometimes disease, sometimes happiness, sometimes unhappiness. There is never unchanging happiness or unhappiness in this world. Change is the most natural thing in this world. But devotees expect a special agreement with the Lord, Chosen-ness, you must look after us. You know what it means really if God gives you happiness, that is the greatest curse, greatest harm anybody can do to us. Do we understand that? Suppose God gives you the most loving family, children, plenty of money, what would be your condition? You will be in this world, in this so-called Samsara for ever and ever. It is only when the blows come, right and left, front and back, mostly from the backside, then you are pushed forward. There was, in Calcutta, Howrah Bridge, people were passing, suddenly, a child slipped from the bridge and fell into the river and everybody is very sympathetic, looking with greatest sorrow, and the child is about to drown, and nobody is going forward to help the child; suddenly, there was this American reporter with his camera and all that, he was seeing, jumping into the river, and going to the child, rescuing him, and somehow brought him to the shore. And naturally, the reporters were all agog. They ran after him, and then praised him, and the next day, all this was there, his photograph, his news, and everything. And some of them said, "Oh! You are God. You have saved. What can we do for you to please you as a reward?" He said, "I would like to find that fellow who pushed me". [Laughter]

When miseries, suffering comes, really it is a great blessing. And God also is a very wise person. Do not think that He will just push you without any discrimination. If at all He gives suffering to devotees, that would be the right type of suffering which he knows the devotee can put up and it will be good for the devotee. He never gives any kind of pain or misery so that that will drown the child but never helps the child. So, it is very important for us that we sit, that we practice, first of all, think what type of concept I have about God. If our idea of God is as a happy, kind, merciful God, it will transform us because we become as we think. And thinking of God is the most

important spiritual concept. Now, we come about what does the Vedanta has to say? What type of concept it has about God? One important point that we had already discussed in detail is that we do not really know about God. All that we know is our own understanding of God. We must always bear in mind, these are all just thoughts, concepts. Our mind thinks this must be God. So, there are three ideas according to Vedanta or Hinduism. This idea of God in Vedanta is based upon Vedic revelation supplemented by its elucidation contained in the Puranas, the Tantras. And the writings of the great philosopher-teachers, Acharyas like Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva. And even to understand these concepts that are exposed in these scriptures, one needs an authentic interpreter. Often, incarnations of God act as interpreters of our concepts of God. One of the greatest contributions Sri Ramakrishna has given to us is that we should never limit our concept of God. He used to simply say, “Never have limited ideas about God”. This is a most marvelous significant statement. What does it mean? It means God is so infinite one can have infinite number of ideas and yet there is space for infinite number of more ideas about God. How is it possible? Can you have more than infinite number of ideas? That is a concept. Infinity is not a number. It is a concept. Suppose if you add one to infinity, what would be the result? Only infinity. Suppose you take away one from infinity, what happens? It is exactly same. This idea is expressed in some of the Upanishads –

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Puurnnam-Adah Puurnnam-Idam Puurnnaat-Puurnnam-Udacyate |
Puurnnasya Puurnnam-Aadaaya Puurnnam-Eva-Avashishyate ||
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||

That transcendental reality is infinite. This reality, the world which we see in front of us is also infinite. This world which is infinite has come out of that transcendental infinity. Even though it has come out that infinity, that infinity remains infinite only. It never diminishes, it never becomes more than anything else. So, these are the three concepts Sri Ramakrishna very often used to tell through small examples. After saying, do not have any limitations about the idea of God, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, quote very often Hanuman or Anjaneya is considered to be **Jnaninam agraganya**. He is the foremost of the knowers of God. So, Hanuman was asked, what is your concept of God? And what he gave in reply to this question summarizes what we are about to discuss. And what did he say?

deha-buddhya tu dasoham jiva-buddhya tvadamshakah |
atma-buddhya tvamevaham iti me nishcita matih ||

When I consider myself as a body, then you are the Lord and I am your humble servant. When I consider myself as an individual soul, you are the whole and I am the part. And when I consider myself as the Supreme Reality, there is absolutely no difference between you and me. We are the same. And what a marvelous idea is expressed in this !!

This is what exactly we are going to discuss. Now, the Vedas – the foundational, the canonical scriptures of Hinduism have expressed all these three ideas about God. Is it that there are three types of God? Why are there three concepts of God? As I said, it is not that God is three, but it is according to the state of consciousness we are in. So, what is the highest concept about God? He is beyond the body and mind. So, as an example of this kind of description, there is the famous Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, there is a passage here:

This Self has been described as “Not this, not this”. He, means the highest reality, is incomprehensible because He is never comprehended. He is indestructible because He cannot be destroyed. He is unattached for He does not attach Himself. He is unfettered, He does not suffer, He is not injured.

This is a passage with profound meaning. I will not go into the details but what it really means is that something cannot be expressed through mind and speech. Why cannot it be expressed through mind and speech? You see, whatever experience we have, however highest the experience, there is an important psychological principle here – that when we are experiencing something, we become One with that. That is the meaning of experience. When we are experiencing something, we cannot say that we are here, and we are experiencing something. Only when we come down from that state of experience, then we find words, “That was good”. So, we actually dwell with memory; play with memory of that experience. Never actually while experiencing, because at that time we transcend time, space, and causation. Let us always keep this definition in mind – **an experience is something which transcends time, space, and causation**. Even as simple as an act, suppose you are eating a sweetmeat, you are hungry, you are not having Diabetics I assume and you got a very good sweet and you have put the sweet on the tongue. At the time, the sweet touches the tongue, there is a split millisecond when you have the experience of becoming One with that sweet. But immediately afterwards, your mind comes down and then you say, (though you use the present tense) “I had this very tasty, sweet. I ate a very tasty, sweet”. Actually, every experience means complete union – you know why? Suppose the sweet is not really good. What do you do? Spit it out. But as soon as it is so good, then what happens? It becomes One with you. Sometimes you become too sweet also, you know. So, nothing can be really expressed. It is the anything that can be expressed, always

remains separate. The highest reality is beyond all expression. Why is it beyond all this expression? First reason I gave you is that every experience is beyond all description. But the one we describe that experience, even worldly experience afterwards, we have to come down as it were, become dualistic, become separated from it, and then use concepts, words, etc. to describe that experience. Now, regarding our worldly experience, we use words, Shabda to indicate an object. To indicate correctly so that others can understand what we mean, we have to use the correct words. And to be able to experience ourselves, the correct understanding of what is meant by these particular words, there are five conditions to be fulfilled. What are those five conditions?

1. The first condition to be fulfilled is that the object should be present. It must be available for direct perception. You are seeing me; I am seeing you; you are hearing me, etc. There is no need for somebody else to tell you. This is a direct perception. Suppose I am sitting here and say, "Oh! so and so devotee is entering through the door. All of you turn your faces and experience what I am experiencing or see what I am seeing. Suppose I tell you, "There comes Brahman." And you all turn your heads towards that. What do you see? Do not think I am seeing it; I am only saying it. What do you see? You do not see anything because Brahman is not directly perceptible. By the words, "directly perceptible", what I mean is through these five sense organs and even to the mind. It is not an object of this body or mind. And therefore, to make any meaning of our words, one of the conditions that must be fulfilled is, it must be present and it must be perceivable or experienceable by everybody. Otherwise, Sri Ramakrishna says, "I see the Divine Mother". But what about others who are sitting in front of him? If there is somebody who is mad, or who is hallucinating, there is a ghost here. He is seeing the ghost; it may not be denied. But are others seeing it? No. Therefore, this is the first condition – for a word to be meaningful, it must be experienceable, perceptible, directly by everybody.
2. The second condition that also helps us is that the object must belong to some species. For example, suppose you are sitting in your room. And somebody shouts at you, "There is a tree behind your house", you are not seeing the tree. But immediately after hearing his words, there comes a picture of the tree into your mind. You know exactly what the other person is talking about. How do you know? Because you have seen a tree many times before and the tree is not a solitary thing; the tree belongs to a species. Supposing there is an apple tree; you have never seen an apple tree, but you have seen a mango tree, that also will serve the purpose because this apple tree is another kind of tree like the mango tree. Tree is a species; human being is a species; a cat is a species; a cow is a species. So, the object must belong to some species called Jati. First is Pratyaksha. Second is Jati.

3. The third way of making words meaningful is, the object, even if you are not seeing it must have a quality. It must have something distinguishable from the other things. Supposing you are sitting in a room with friends and one of them tells you, I would like to have one blue rose. There are so many roses there; if he simply says I want that particular rose and you will not be able to make any meaning out of it. There are so many roses, which rose do you exactly mean? So, one of the ways is I want a blue rose. Among all the roses, there must be only one rose which has the quality called blueness. Then immediately you know what this person is talking about. You go and bring that rose, isn't it? Or you can say, if there is a sweet, "I want a yellow colored sweet". And you know the other sweets are white, or bluish, or whatever it is, but you know exactly what the person wants. Quality. You bring that red horse. There are so many horses but one horse with completely distinguishable red color. This is called Guna. Or bring the most fragrant flower. Some quality which is special to that particular object which can be clearly distinguished from all other objects, that is called Quality. By Quality also, words become meaningful to us. Or otherwise, you go to a railway station, "Give me a ticket". Is it not a foolish type of request? You have to specify where you want to go. Then only, the ticket will be given. Of course, if you park illegally anywhere, you will be given ticket without any asking for it. This is the third – it is called Guna.
4. The fourth way words can be meaningful to us is, they must be connected with some kind of activity. Suppose one car is obstructing there. Then, we want that car to be removed so that some other car can get out of that place. And we do not know, to whom that car belongs. So, what do we say? The driver who is driving such and such a car, you please come out. Immediately, the driver comes out. We do not know the person, but we know him by the activity. He is the driver. Or if the food has gone bad, call the cook. We do not know the person but by his activity, we know. Or sometimes when celebrations are going on here, sounds are coming from behind, so the people who are making noise, please shut your mouths. So, by activities we also know. There was, in a Bengali family, a lot of children and there was a small shrine room. And the mother used to keep some fruits in the shrine room, and she had kept some bananas there, and after some time, she went and checked them, one was missing. So, she shouted, "Who has taken the banana?!" All the children kept quiet; one fellow lifted and said, "I have not taken the banana." The mother understands that is the fellow who has taken the banana. So, by activity, we can also make words meaningful. This is called Kriya.
5. The last is Sambandha – Relationship. Father, mother, etc. etc. Call your father. I do know your father. But you know because you have a relationship with the father. Or you can say, this officer who does this office work – let him come.

Another way, suppose there is a book on the table, please bring that book which is on the table. There are many books all around, but I want only that particular book which is on the table. If I want that particular table, I say “Bring that table on which there is a book. Do not bring any other table but only that particular table I want”. This is called Relationship.

These are the five ways by which words become meaningful to us. But the Ultimate Reality, God:

1. It is not Pratyaksha
2. It does not have qualities because it is called Nirguna.
3. It has no Jati or Species because that is one of its kind. Do you know that? Supposing I gave an example, there is a tree behind your room. And immediately, even though you are seeing the tree you understand because you have seen many trees before. Suppose you have never seen Sun before in your life. For the first time, you are sitting in a dark room and somebody shouts, “There is a Sun behind you, look at it”. Can the person have any idea about the Sun? That is because the Sun does not belong to any species. It is only one. That is why you cannot single it out as a species. Species means there must be many. So, God does not have any qualities, he is called Nirguna.
4. God does not have any activities, he is called Niskriya (without any activity, inactive)
5. God also does not have any relationship. That is why He is called Nissangha (completely detached). This is the idea being addressed here.

So, what is the way to give a concept about that God? It is to give a negative idea, there is no other way. “Neti – Neti”. Is it like this? No. Is it like this? No. Sri Ramakrishna gives this beautifully – A girl was married, and the husband came and her companions who had never seen her husband were all sitting, this girl was also sitting, and they were all asking. Mind you, this is an Indian girl hundred years back. Nowadays, if you ask “Where is your husband?”, she will go, catch hold of his ears and say “this is my husband”. So, they were asking, “Is that your husband?” No. “Is that your husband?” No. She is going on saying “No”, “No”... Ultimately, there is only one fellow – “Is that your husband?” First of all, there is no need to ask because there is only one fellow. But just to make sure he is the husband; she does not say anything. What does she do? She smiles and puts her head down. That indicates to the others that that is the husband of the girl. But what Sri Ramakrishna is telling through this very common analogy is, this profound truth that God cannot be indicated. There are other ways of indicating about God. It is not saying anything about God, but it is an indication. This indication in Sanskrit is called Nyaya. Nyaya means an analogy. One Nyaya is Arundhati Nyaya. When newly married couple, the priest has to show an exemplary

husband and wife, Vasishtha and Arundathi. Nowadays, many marriages take place in the daytime and the priest has no time to wait until nighttime. So, he says it is a custom, it is written in the book, you must show after marriage, an ideal for this. So, he will take them to a tree, outside the house, he says “Do you see the tree?” Yes. “Do you see that branch?” Yes. And in between the branch, “Do you see those so many stars?” Yes. And in that star, there is one small star. Yes, I see it. It is called Arundathi. And you see another star beside it, that is Arundathi-Vasishtha. This is called Arundhati Nyaya (Analogy of showing this star called Arundathi). In daytime, what stars do you see? Just a custom to show.

So, When Vedanta says “Neti Neti”, through negative usage of words, if it is not this, then it must be something else. There are certain ways that human beings have found out, by sometimes saying something else, sometimes by saying negative things, sometimes by saying something completely different, certain meanings are very clearly indicated. Let me give you two examples of this:

Suppose there are, on a table, so many tumblers. And each tumbler is filled with water excepting one tumbler which is empty. So, somebody tells you, “Bring that empty tumbler”. Mind, words are very tricky. ‘Bring the empty tumbler’. Can you bring empty? Do you know what emptiness is? Have you ever seen emptiness? Bring the blue glass. Bring the glass with water. You can say that... bring the tumbler which has only half a glass of water. You can understand it. Bring the empty tumbler – you can understand because you do not know what emptiness is, but you know what full is. So, you see, every glass is filled with water excepting one tumbler and you know that there is no water. Not having any water is called emptiness. It is not a positive quality at all. It is purely a negative idea. So, you bring that; you understand what the man means. This is indicating something through the usage of words, “Not this, Not this”.

Another clever way of indicating some idea is, I will give two examples – interesting examples. By talking completely different things, what is that? Supposing a mother has two children and she brings both the children to me, and the mother introduces the children to me. “Swamiji, my youngest son is very intelligent”. She is not saying anything about the eldest son at all. She is not talking anything about the eldest son. What does it mean? It means he is not that intelligent. She is not telling anything about the eldest son. And yet by these words that the mother has clearly indicated that the eldest son is not that intelligent. This is one way that we also use in all other things in our day to day life. Even Gods and Goddesses also use this word, do you know that? Yesterday, we had Jagaddatri Puja. So, Holy Mother’s place in Jayrambati, Jagaddatri was invoked. They themselves invited themselves and came (that is a different story). But after worshipping for many years, Holy Mother had decided that it is a hassle to worship Mother every year so, she wanted to put a stop. That night, the Goddess Jagaddatri appeared in the dreams of Holy Mother. Do you

know what she saw telling Holy Mother? That that person's mother has it in mind to worship me, shall I go there? What is she telling? What she is telling is, if you do not want to worship me, do not think that I have no place, I have the other place to go. So, it is now for you to choose – the clearest indication of what she wants really is “I want to be worshipped by you”. But she is not telling directly, I want to be worshipped you, she is telling the mother of such and such a person is thinking of worshipping me. Even Gods and Goddesses also take to this recourse to this clever way of conveying their ideas. So, this is another example. And in our scriptures, these examples have been very clearly used. The first language used in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is “Neti Neti” “Not this Not this”. “Is it this? This? This?” No. Not this. But lest it should give us an idea, “Not this” perhaps such a thing does not exist at all. That is not the meaning. By negative language, they are saying, because whatever idea you have about this world is completely inadequate to understand what we are indicating to you. It is much much much bigger picture, much different from what you have experienced – that is the only idea! So, this is one of the examples from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. There is another Upanishad called Mandukya Upanishad. It is one of the smallest Upanishads, having only twelve mantras and it is one of the toughest Upanishads. But in brief, this Upanishad is talking about three states of Consciousness – the waking, the dreaming, and the deep sleep state (Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupti). So, the Mandukya is telling,

Brahman – It is not that which is conscious of the outer world; nor that which is conscious of the inner world; nor that which is conscious of both; nor that which is a mass of consciousness; it is not simple consciousness nor unconsciousness; It is unseen, indescribable, ungraspable without any mark, unthinkable and immutable; It is the essence of unitary self-awareness; It is that into which the world is resolved; It is the peaceful, the benign, the non-dual.

These statements, though negative in form, make it sufficiently clear that what is meant is not a nihil, but a transcendent entity which tears the web of subject-object, cause-effect, and time-space relationships. This is the meaning of duality. We live in a world of duality means, if one thing is present, the other thing is also present. If there is time, there is space. If there is space, there is causality. If there is subject, there is an object. If there is an object, there is a subject. So, if there is an effect, there is a cause. If there is a cause, there is an effect. We cannot escape – this is the net of Maya. But these statements mean that the Reality is something which is far beyond. So, Sri Ramakrishna is to be asked, Is God with form? Yes, He is with form? Is He without form? Yes, He is without form. And then he used to say something very paradoxical – God is both beyond form and formlessness. What does he mean? Is it not illogical to say? God is with form, we can understand; God is without form, we can understand; but what is there beyond both form and formlessness? Is there something? All that he

means is where there is a form, there is an idea of formlessness. Where there is formlessness' idea, there is an idea of form. So, what is called a relative-absolute idea. When we say, this is absolute, it is not Absolute absolute. Forgive my expression of language. It is a relative absolute. That is to say, something which is opposite of relativity. When we say it is Absolute, we really mean that it is the opposite of relativity. With this view, we cannot think of this Absolute because this relativity is there. When we are thinking of that absolute, this relativity is absent, but it is there in the background. But what Sri Ramakrishna meant is, Absolute absolute means you do not think about it, much less speak about it, you can only experience it. This is the first concept Vedanta is again and again and again insisting upon us. I will also discuss why it is very important to have this concept. And if this concept is lacking in the background, then what would be the consequences in our day to day practical life?

So, the second concept uses positive epithets describing Him as a suprapersonnel, transcendent and immanent entity. The second concept of God is that it is still without form but there are certain concepts, very positive concepts. What is the most positive concept we have of this second type? It is 'God is called as Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer'. Why this concept has come? If there is something, there must be some cause for it. If you suddenly see a pot, then you should imagine there is somebody who is the maker of the pot. Because the pot cannot make itself. In Vedanta, they use what is called Instrumental cause and Intelligent cause. Upadhana karana (Upadhana means material) means material cause. A pot comes out of clay. Clay is the material cause of the pot. But the clay by itself cannot form something. There was an atheist hundred years back, and there was a bishop, but both of them were very good friends. But always used to attack each other. The man who does not believe in God says, "These are all – Religion, Scripture, these are all bunk, these are created by priests". But they were good friends otherwise. It is possible they may have different opinions but still be friends. You know the Bishop Berkley, and it was Aldous Huxley's father who was opposed to that. So, Mr. Huxley once entered into the Bishop's office and found that somebody presented him a beautiful table clock. So, Huxley was very pleased. He was very impressed by it and said, "Oh Bishop! You have a wonderful clock! How did it come?" He actually meant who gave it to you. The Bishop took the opportunity to poke him and said, "No, nobody had given it to me. It just made itself". So, this world cannot come out of itself. There must have been somebody who has done it. This is what nowadays, is called Intelligent Design Theory. If there is creation, there must be some creator about it. So, the Brahman or Iswara, He is the Nimittha Karana, an intelligent, a conscious entity like a potter and who takes advantage of the material and shapes various things out of it. This is the first idea we have. The second idea we have is, He should have infinite auspicious quality, vivesha kalyana gunasagara. We want only infinite auspicious qualities, what about inauspicious

qualities? According to other religions, that God is only good, He is merciful, He is compassionate, who told you that? God also is very unmerciful, very uncompassionate, just as He creates, He also destroys. He also brings about natural disasters. This is the idea Vedanta gives us, that any quality that comes, that we experience, is all coming out of God. If you see a wicked person, who is the root cause of the wickedness? It must be God. Because if we do not accept, then we have to question and see who the author of this wicked quality is. We have to create a Satan separately. God and Satan will go on eternally fighting with each other. There are wonderful ideas, it is not my idea to go into those things. But this is the second concept about God – that He is the creator, He is an ocean of infinite auspicious qualities. This is the second highest concept about God. Even that concept, we are not capable of understanding. Then, there is a lowest concept of God which is God is with forms, not only with form, but with infinite number of forms. God is with infinite number of names. God is with infinite number of qualities. Even if we understand this third and lowest concept of God correctly, there would not be so much of conflict between religion and religion, nation and nation, etc. This we will discuss in our next class, probably in the month of December.

Om Shantih Shantih Shantih: ||